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Preparations for the International Year of Forests, 2011

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present preliminary report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/193, in which the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session a report on the state of preparations for the International Year of Forests, 2011. The report highlights some of the key initiatives and activities that are being organized by Governments, the United Nations and other stakeholders to celebrate the Year. The concluding section offers some recommendations on next steps.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 61/193, the General Assembly proclaimed 2011 as the International Year of Forests and invited Governments, the United Nations system, relevant non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other actors to make concerted efforts to raise awareness at all levels to strengthen the sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

2. In resolution 61/193, the Assembly requested the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to serve as the focal point for the implementation of activities for the observance of the Year, in collaboration with Member States, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and international, regional and subregional organizations and processes as well as relevant major groups. It also encouraged voluntary partnerships among Member States, international organizations and major groups to facilitate and promote activities related to the Year at the local and national levels, including by creating national committees or designating focal points in their respective countries.

3. The present report provides information on the preparations at the national, regional and international levels for the observance of the Year, taking into account replies received in response to a note verbale dated 10 July 2009. A number of Member States and organizations indicated their strong interest in organizing activities at the national and regional levels to celebrate the International Year; however, at the time of drafting of the present report, specific details for those activities were still under development. Furthermore, with more than a year to go until the International Year, significant work remains in substantively engaging key stakeholders, including in particular the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and relevant major groups.

II. Key activities

4. The International Year of Forests represents a unique opportunity to increase public awareness of the key role of forests and sustainable forest management in building a greener, more equitable and sustainable future. The year-long series of events provides a platform on which to build strategic partnerships, showcase success stories and innovative solutions and galvanize greater public participation in forest-related activities at all levels.

5. A concept paper is being developed by the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat outlining key objectives of the Year and providing recommendations on how Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other partners can develop activities to observe the Year. That concept paper will be made available in all official languages in early 2010.

6. An official logo is being developed by the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat in collaboration with the Department of Public Information and will be made available for use by national coordinating committees and United Nations organizations in conjunction with the Year.

7. An official website is being developed by the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat and will serve as a central clearing house for information about

the Year, its objectives and activities, including a calendar of national, regional and international initiatives related to the Year. It will feature a range of interactive web tools to elicit feedback and dialogue, with a particular focus on reaching out to children and youth. The website will include electronic versions of all promotional materials related to the Year, including photographs, videos and audio and PowerPoint presentations. The website will include a portal geared towards the media, which will feature links to forest news items and a press kit with fact sheets, brochures and other informational documents related to critical forest issues.

8. A commemorative stamp series is going to be issued on the occasion of the International Year by the United Nations Postal Administration, in collaboration with the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat, during the official launch of the International Year in January 2011.

9. The United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat is working in close collaboration with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to explore areas of synergy between the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 and the International Year of Forests, including through the development of promotional items such as a short film on forest biodiversity.

10. The official launch of the Year will take place at United Nations Headquarters during the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (24 January-4 February 2011), and the programme will include high-level panel discussions, a press conference and the issuance of the United Nations commemorative stamp series for the International Year and other public events currently under consideration.

11. While the Year will be a global event, a large number of activities to celebrate the International Year will take place at the national level. National committees have the responsibility for coordinating and publicizing country-level celebrations and communicating the plans and results to the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat.

12. The Year will be marked by celebrations at major forest events in 2011, including:

The second Ministerial Meeting on Forests of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China

The traditional professional holiday of foresters in Bulgaria in April 2011

Forest Days in the Czech Republic

A meeting of senior forest officials from ASEAN member States and China on regional policy dialogue

The twelfth meeting of the European association of state forest organizations (EUSTAFOR)

The Communauté des Etats Sahélo-Sahariens plans on organizing a number of meetings in 2011 on combating desertification and safeguarding forest resources, including the first meeting of the steering committee of the Great Green Wall initiative

The second Asia-Pacific Forestry Week in conjunction with the twenty-fourth session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission

The first annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation

Croatia envisages organizing activities to raise awareness and foster exchange of practical strategies for promoting sustainable forest management

A forestry fair in El Salvador with a focus on development

National Tree Planting Day (first Friday in October) in Jamaica

The ninth national forestry congress in Guatemala

The tenth Pacific heads of forestry meeting to review past and present implementation of forestry activities in the Pacific

A conference on "Holistic management of forest ecosystems in Cyprus: challenges and prospects"

Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Jamaica and Romania plan to organize exhibitions on forest topics at the national level

Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic and Jamaica will hold competitions in areas ranging from photo, art, school posters and essay writing to athletic triathlons in forests

Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, El Salvador and Romania will organize field trips and tours to visit protected areas in forests

A meeting of the directors of forestry departments from European Union member States in Poland in November 2011

The Czech Republic, Cyprus, El Salvador, Jamaica, Morocco, Romania and the secretariat of the Pacific Community will publish forest-related books, brochures and educational materials

III. Recommendations

13. **Recognizing the need to promote sustainable management of all types of forests at all levels, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:**

(a) **Further encourage Member States to promote awareness on challenges and success stories related to implementing sustainable forest management at the national level;**

(b) **Renew its invitation to Member States to establish national coordinating committees or designate focal points to promote and coordinate activities and initiatives related to the Year at the local and national levels;**

(c) **Further encourage creation of voluntary partnerships among Member States, international organizations and major groups organizations to facilitate and promote activities related to the Year at the local and national levels;**

(d) **Promote observance of the Year not as an isolated event but as part of a continuing process of advocacy and partnership to foster greater awareness and action towards sustainable forest management at all levels;**

(e) Request the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session on the state of preparations for the International Year of Forests, 2011;

(f) Convene a special one-day high-level event of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session in September 2011 to generate public awareness and political action towards sustainable forest management.